

Commander's Connection



Photo by Staff Sgt. Stacy Simon

Col. Sam Angelella hangs a yellow bow on the fence along Highway 378 April 16. Bows were donated by The Sumter Volunteers to show their support for the military.

"Commander's Connection" is a link between Col. Sam Angelella, 20th Fighter Wing commander, and the Shaw community.

Questions or concerns that can't be resolved through normal channels can be called in and recorded at 895-4611 or e-mailed to commandersconnection@shaw.af.mil.

*Callers should leave a name and telephone number in case questions need clarification. Comments of general interest may be published in **The Shaw Spirit**.*

Q I have a question about building security while in Force Protection Condition Bravo. Are civilians authorized to help secure buildings?

A The answer to your question depends on how the civilian was hired. If the civilian was hired by contract (i.e. base library, dining facility, etc.), they cannot perform security duties unless it's written specifically into their contract.

If the civilian was hired as a general schedule, wage grade or non-appropriated funds employee, they can assist in accomplishing routine security functions. Thank you for your question.

Drunk driving costs more than money

By Anonymous
Drunk Driver

Late one evening, after a long tedious day at work, I grabbed the keys to my truck and took a leisurely evening drive.

As I drove to town, I made a stop to pick up a six-pack of beer. After the day I had, I felt it would be a nice way to relax and end the evening. I found a secluded area to park and enjoyed the view with a few cold ones. I was only a few miles from home and felt no problems could come of this. After about four and a half beers, I decided to go on home. It was getting late, and I had to work the next day.

As I made my way home, everything seemed fine; then it happened, I looked in the rear view mirror and saw the blue lights.

From this moment forward, my world was turned upside down. The officer told me I was stopped for driving over the median. I was given a field sobriety test and then told I was being detained.

The officer asked me to submit to having a breathalyzer test done.

If I said no to the test, I would have lost my license for three months. I submitted to the test. Once completed, the officer told me I had exceeded the legal driving limit. My heart went in my throat as the officer read me my Miranda rights and placed me under arrest.

I spent the night in jail (mandatory for all driving under the influence offenders in Sumter

County) and as a result of my arrest, I had to go before a judge to post bond before I could be released.

Because of my military status, the \$759.50 bond (cost for first-time offense) was waived, and I was released to my supervisor and first sergeant.

The next duty day, I reported to the wing commander in my blues along with my squadron commander, first sergeant and supervisor. I explained what happened and consequently lost my base driving privileges for a year. Then I had to attend Life Skills counseling classes on base. My court date came later that month. In addition to the fine, the court revoked my driver's license until I complete a state-sponsored driving course that will cost about \$75.

Seems like a pretty lengthy process for drinking a few beers, but those four beers changed my life. The look of disappointment from the leadership, time away from my job and the humiliation should make us all think twice about drinking and driving.

When this is complete, I will await the squadron commander's decision on the appropriate punishment for this incident. So, even if you only have one beer, do not drive; call a friend, supervisor, Airmen Against Drunk Driving, first sergeant or a cab. Whatever you do, don't drive. Take it from me, you will pay for the next year.

I not only could have seriously hurt or killed someone, but I lost a lot of duty time due to the classes, court and jail and could have lost my career over a stupid choice. So, please learn from my choice.

DRUNK DRIVING STATISTICS

■ In the United States, traffic crashes are the largest single cause of death for everyone from age 6 through 33. Almost half of these fatalities are related to drunk driving.

■ Drunk driving statistics show approximately three in every 10 Americans will be involved in an alcohol-related crash at some time in their lives.

■ Approximately 43 Americans are lost each day, 305 each week and 1,309 each month because of alcohol-related accidents. That's one life lost every 33 minutes.

■ An estimated 513,000 people are injured in alcohol-related crashes each year, an average of 59 people per hour or approximately one person every minute.

■ The amount of deaths caused by drunk driving is the equivalent of a fully loaded 747 crashing three times a week, every week.

■ In the past decade, four times as many Americans died in drunk driving crashes as were killed in the entire Vietnam War.

(Information courtesy of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration and the National Council on Drunk Driving.)

The Shaw Spirit

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Following LOAC defines who's the good guy

By Lt. Col. Gary Brown
20th Fighter Wing Staff Judge Advocate

How many times in your career have you had the Law Of Armed Conflict briefing? Many of the concepts you learned there have real-world application in the current Iraqi conflict – because Iraq is such a flagrant violator of the laws.

The United States, on the other hand, has always been able to build international coalitions because we are the good guys. Not only are we on the side of peace and freedom, but when we have to fight, we fight fair. We spend an incredible amount of time and energy ensuring we precisely hit the correct targets and minimize collateral damage.

It has been said Iraq didn't have the "luxury" of fighting legally because the rules of war favor the strong. But the law of war is not an arbitrary set of guidelines. It was developed for one purpose – to protect those not involved in the fighting from the ravages of war. When the laws are violated, civilians and military members who have lost the means to resist (like prisoners of war and surrendering troops) are put at risk.

The press has reported many instances of Iraq violating LOAC, and many more examples will probably come to light as we sort things out in the next few months. A few of the more egregious examples are highlighted below.

Abuse of Prisoners of War

We don't know yet whether Iraq murdered any coalition POWs, but we do know they paraded them before television cameras. The Geneva Convention on Prisoners of War (1949), Article 13, protects POWs from "acts of violence or intimidation and against insults and public curiosity." Putting individual POWs on TV is often cited as an example of violating this prohibition.

Fighting in and around civilian areas

Many Iraqi military attacks on advancing coalition troops originated from civilian neighborhoods. There were even reports that Iraqi troops were using hospitals as cover for their attacks. Obviously, this tactic makes it difficult for the opposing military to avoid causing damage to civilian areas, and causes unnecessary civilian casualties. This misuse of civilian areas violates the principle of distinction, set out in Additional Protocol I (1977), Article 48, which states: "*Parties to the conflict*

shall at all times distinguish between the civilian population and combatants and between civilian objects and military objectives." This responsibility belongs to both the attacker and the defender.

Soldiers fighting in civilian clothes

Combatants must always take steps to ensure they are not mistaken for civilians. This requirement appears in the Hague Convention on Land Warfare (1907), Article 1. Anyone found to have violated this provision would not be entitled to protection as a POW if captured. Instead, they could be treated as a terrorist or common criminal, subject to prosecution.

Misuse of the white flag

The white flag is a powerful symbol long used to signal a request to parley or surrender. Protection for those bearing the white flag was formalized in the Hague Convention, Chapter III. During the first war in Iraq, officers in some Iraqi military units forced soldiers to give up all white items of clothing, including their underwear, so they couldn't easily surrender to coalition forces. When the white flag is used to lure troops into an ambush, as some Iraqi forces did in this conflict, its future legitimate use is put at risk – meaning troops who would like to surrender might not be able to do so.

Iraq broke the law – many times. You may ask why we bother following the rules when we were fighting an enemy with such disdain for them. One reason is it is simply the right thing to do. Another reason is it's in our own best interest to respect international law.

By conscientiously avoiding civilian casualties, we keep the American public in our court and persuade many in the international community of the justice of our cause. We also gain a direct military advantage by fighting fairly. If we had plowed through civilian neighborhoods, killing everything that moved, we might have seen house-to-house fighting by civilians protecting their homes and families rather than an outpouring of pro-American sentiment in Baghdad.

And, if we treated the Iraqi POWs the way Iraq treated coalition POWs, wouldn't Iraqi soldiers have been more likely to fight to the death rather than surrender? In the end, we still would have won the war, but the cost in lives and future public support would have been much, much higher.

The law of war exists to keep armed conflict within certain limits and to allow it eventually to end, without disintegrating into a generational feud or pure hatred. U.S. and British troops have done a tremendous job, even in the face of Iraqi provocation, of avoiding unnecessary civilian casualties. We have not let Iraqi war crimes affect our conduct of the war. This discipline and professionalism will continue to pay dividends as we embark on the next great challenge in Iraq – winning the peace.



UNITED STATES ARMED FORCES CODE OF CONDUCT

ARTICLE I.

I am an American, fighting in the forces which guard my country and our way of life. I am prepared to give my life in their defense.

ARTICLE II.

I will never surrender of my own free will. If in command, I will never surrender the members of my command while they still have the means to resist.

ARTICLE III.

If I am captured, I will continue to resist by all means available. I will make every effort to escape and aid others to escape. I will accept neither parole nor special favors from the enemy.

ARTICLE IV.

If I become a prisoner of war, I will keep faith with my fellow prisoners. I will give no information or take part in any action which might be harmful to my comrades. If I am senior, I will take command. If not, I will obey the lawful orders of those appointed over me and will back them up in every way.

ARTICLE V.

When questioned, should I become a prisoner of war, I am required to give name, rank, service number, and date of birth. I will evade answering further questions to the utmost of my ability. I will make no oral or written statements disloyal to my country and its allies or harmful to their cause.

ARTICLE VI.

I will never forget that I am an American, fighting for freedom, responsible for my actions, and dedicated to the principles which made my country free. I will trust in my God and in the United States of America.

1st Lt. Stefanie Williams
20th Communications Squadron



"I joined because where else can you get such a chance to broaden your horizons?"

Airman on the Street

"Why did you join the military or why do you stay?"

Airman Chris Robinson
609th Air Communications Squadron



"I joined so I could travel and see the world and also to serve my country."

Senior Airman Idella Dumas
20th Fighter Wing



"I joined because the military allows me a chance to do a lot more than I could otherwise."

Tech. Sgt. Rick Schleicher
20th Mission Support Squadron



"I stay in the military because of the great people I get to work with and the diversity of the job."